



Grand Blanc Family Sitting High and Dry After May 2004 Storms Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Genesee County, Michigan

Grand Blanc, MI - When the severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding struck the lower part of the State of Michigan in late May 2004, few had any idea that it would affect tens of thousands of Michigan families and cost more than \$51 million in grants and low-interest loans for disaster assistance.



For one Grand Blanc family, the storms and flooding had the opposite affect. What had been their home was flooded again, but this time the Minard family was sitting high and dry and didn't need any disaster assistance. When Karen Minard returned to her old neighborhood near Thread Creek, she couldn't believe her eyes after discovering nine feet of water in the area she had once called "home." In fact, she said that the flooding was as bad, if not worse, than the most damaging flood her family had endured.

It was in 2000 when a flood inundated the city of Grand Blanc, located just 10 miles south of Flint, severely damaging many homes and leaving roads impassible. Flooding from Thread Creek plus poor drainage caused major flooding that left homeowners helpless and city officials unable to control the rising creek. Together, they took a proactive approach to deal with the repeated problem. A Federal disaster declaration made grant money available for mitigation projects throughout the state. Hence, Grand Blanc decided to pursue a Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) project for the acquisition of homes damaged repeatedly by flooding.

The double threat of flooding from Thread Creek and sewage backup led the Minards to participate in the buyout project. The Minards were one of five families who participated in the voluntary buyout program just seven months before the May 2004 flooding. Four of the acquired homes were still awaiting demolition when flooding struck again.

According to Randy Byrne, City Manager of Grand Blanc, City Officials were getting tired of repairing the same damage after every flood and thought a proposal to acquire these homes at a cost share of 75 percent Federal and 25 percent non-Federal match could help to solve the problem. The Community submitted its proposal, and the project was selected by the Michigan State Police/Emergency Management Division (MSP/EMD). When FEMA approved funding, city officials provided homeowners specific criteria for participation that included an appraisal and offer to buy out the property at pre-flood fair market value. Five homeowners decided to be a part of the voluntary project, and the Federal share of the project was \$626,322.

In addition to the families who occupied the acquired homes, the Community also benefited from the buyout. A major component of HMGP is that ownership of the acquired land reverts to the city with a deed restriction stating it must remain open space. The City used the land, demonstrating a conscientious approach to floodplain management, by incorporating it into Rusk Park. The 20 acre recreational park, containing footpaths, baseball diamonds, and tennis courts, will be expanded by two acres as a result of this project. Now when Thread Creek floods, there is no maintenance required for the park.

When asked if he would pursue this type of project again, Byrne said, "It just depends on the number of times homeowners go through this before action is taken to get them out of harm's way." The key to involve the community in this type of project, according to Byrne, "is having a casual meeting and getting everyone on the same page." Informing the residents about the available options is imperative.

Mitigation projects are a joint effort on local, state and Federal levels. This project demonstrates how efforts at each level can contribute to fewer damages and lower risk. By being part of this project, the City no longer has to sandbag or call Public Works crews to clean up the damage. Instead, the city has a larger park, a lower risk of flooding, and happier residents.

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region V**

State: **Michigan**

County: **Genesee County**

City/Community: **Grand Blanc**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**

Hazard Type: **Severe Storm; Flooding**

Activity/Project Type: **Acquisition/Buyouts**

Activity/Project Start Date: **10/2000**

Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**

Funding Source: **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)**

Funding Recipient: **Local Government**

Funding Recipient Name: **City of Grand Blanc**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **Amount Not Available**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **Unknown**

Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**

Tested By Federal Disaster #: **No Federal Disaster specified**

Year First Tested: **2004**

Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.twp.grand-blanc.mi.us>

Reference URL 2: <http://www.floodsmart.gov/>

Main Points

- Flooding from Thread Creek plus poor drainage caused major flooding that left homeowners helpless and City officials unable to control the rising creek.
- Homeowners were provided with specific criteria for acquisition participation that included an appraisal and offer to buy out the property at pre-flood fair market value.
- In addition to the families who moved out of harms way, the community also benefited from the buyout with an expanded park.



Floods: a common occurrence in Grand Blanc.



The area now converted to recreational open space.